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Adult Guide on the Middle East

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DULT GUIDE ON THE MIDDLE EAST

NEW VOICES
OLD WORLDS

by

Y. Armajani



ADULT GUIDE ON

the Middle East

by Y. ARMAJANI

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Talking It Over with the Leader

So you want to study the Middle East! Have you ever had experience with a campfire? When you are camping overnight, you build a good fire. The flames give light and warmth. The fire attracts people. The atmosphere is peaceful and friendly. You talk on all kinds of subjects and listen to many stories. Then it's time to go to bed. You bank the fire and crawl into your tent. In the morning when you wake up, you push away the ashes and try to find embers with which to build another fire.

The Middle East is a campfire. There was a time when its flames went high and illuminated the surrounding areas. Its light and warmth attracted many peoples. All roads led to the Middle East then. Its cultural flames danced skyward and illuminated the surrounding world. Its light and warmth attracted many people, and in the fellowship, much was learned and shared. And then the people went into a deep slumber and the ashes of time covered their huge fire.

Now the people of the Middle East have awakened and want to push away the ashes, use the embers, and make a new fire. In this they are confronted with two problems. One is that every time they have attempted to push the ashes away, they have been prevented by hands from outside. These hands have been British, Russian, French, German, and sometimes American. Because of these hands, Middle Easterners have become suspicious of the West. The other problem is one of choice. The people of the Middle East

don't know which logs to use to make a fire. The Christian missions in the Middle East are in many ways helping the people push away the ashes and choose the proper logs. In any case, the disturbance of the ashes has created dust in the air, and this dust has clouded the vision of people all over the world—hence the recurring crises in the Middle East.

YOUR PURPOSE

As Leader, your job in this study program is a tremendously challenging one. While encouraging your group to carry on their interest in the Middle East individually and collectively during the study year, you are called upon, in the short time that you have at your disposal, to do two things:

In the first place, your job is to correct misconceptions by providing adequate information. A study of the geography and the people of the area will lead you to a study of the culture, social and political institutions, and the religious faith of the Middle East. Books, maps, films, and other materials of the study year will help you to share this information with your group. Prepare thoroughly, for you will find many misconceptions and much lack of knowledge about the subject of the study.

In the second place, your job is to channel informed thinking into the context of the world mission of the church. This is of utmost importance. Indeed, this is the aim of the whole program. A study of history, geography, peoples, etc. of the Middle East is just a means to achieve your purpose—an understanding of the world mission. The study is important insofar as it will help to present the Christian witness at home and abroad more effectively. The end is to witness for Christ intelligently, effectively, humbly, and fervently, believing that if Christ be lifted up he shall draw all men unto himself.

Having discussed the over-all purpose of our course, let

us turn to some of the specifics. Your church in general and your study group in particular should get acquainted with:

1. *The geography and history of the Middle East.* Many of today's crises in the Middle East stem from the past and from the physical nature of the region. (Session 1, "Along the Line of March.")
2. *The peoples and their problems.* Diversity is the key word here—diversity in origins, customs, contributions. (Session 2, "Meet the People.")
3. *Islam.* This is one of the great religions of the world, and how it will adapt itself to the tremendous changes of modern times is anybody's guess, but it is imperative that Christians have some understanding of such a powerful force. (Session 3, "The Nature of Islam.")
4. *The old churches.* Christianity started in the Middle East and nearly all of the ancient churches have had a glorious history of sacrifice and achievement. (Session 4, "Christians of the Eastern Church.")
5. *The missionary movement.* Despite obstacles and mistakes, the missionaries played an important and exciting part in the awakening of the peoples of the Middle East. (Session 5, "Missionary Achievements—Yesterday and Today.")
6. *The responsibilities of each of us.* What we can do as Christians and as citizens. (Session 6, "The Direction of the Middle East Pilgrimage.")

Because of the nature of the world we live in and the pressing problems confronting the peoples of the Middle East, this is a pretty heavy study program. Perhaps your group will be able to devote more than six sessions to this important mission field. Almost any one or all of the sessions can be expanded. The reports on the Countries of Emphasis, for example, can be treated as fully as time will permit. On the other hand, if you have only a short period at your disposal, don't be discouraged. The skeins of life

in this area have been so tangled by time that at best one can only "hit the high spots." Sessions 3-5 are suggested for those with a limited schedule.

HOW TO GET STARTED

No matter what the size of your group or how much time you can give to the study, careful organization is imperative. The more people you can put to work on the study program, the more interest you will create. But—provide for a strong Steering Committee to keep everything in hand!

The Steering Committee should include all committee chairmen and should assist the Leader in all planning. Its members should take up the slack in case of illness, etc.; should act as liaison; should see that the program is operating smoothly on every level. The work of the Steering Committee is indispensable, continuous, and mostly unobtrusive—at least in this *Guide*, which will not refer to it directly again. It is assumed that every member of the Steering Committee will be thoroughly familiar with all of the study materials.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

In this *Guide* the Program Committee is envisioned as an operational committee whose functions are largely delegated to subcommittees. The Program Committee will select its subcommittee chairmen and will oversee all subcommittee activities so that plans mesh together and the program runs smoothly. The allocation of time to each session part, and the determination of the emphasis to be given each part, following direction from the Steering Committee, are important responsibilities of this committee. Its subcommittees are: Map Committee, Bookstall Committee, Area Reports Committee, Special Events Committee, Re-

freshments Committee. (For reasons of space all *sub-committees* of the Program Committee are referred to in the *Guide* as "Program Committee."

Map Committee: Because of the rapid changes in the Middle East, it seems desirable to have a special committee to keep the map up-to-date, to mark the Countries of Emphasis for each session, and to indicate denominational work in each area as it is studied. This committee will work closely with the Area Reports Committee on the denominational materials.

Bookstall Committee: Normally the work of this committee would be assigned to the Publicity Committee, but the bookstall is considered so important to the theme that a specific committee with no other responsibilities may seem desirable. Bookstall displays should be carefully related to each session theme and should include the Countries of Emphasis as well. Folk arts and crafts, flags, picture posters, and art books will enhance the exhibit. Perhaps books on Persian rugs, mosaics, Middle Eastern architecture, as well as the reading books listed in Johnson, can be borrowed from the public library and included in the display when appropriate. A bookstall might be decorated to resemble a bazaar shop or might exhibit typical food products.

Area Reports Committee: This committee will be responsible for determining the format of the entire series of reports on the Countries of Emphasis (see Session 2). It will select the persons to make each report and will supply them with material from denominational sources, the public library, magazines, and newspapers, as well as indicating the text references. The chairman of the Area Reports Committee should be prepared to lead a brief discussion on the reports in each session. (Throughout the *Guide*, this chairman is referred to simply as the Leader.)

Special Events Committee: This is a special planning committee whose responsibilities will include the round table speeches, discussion questions, debate materials, etc.—either actual preparation or supervision of same. Suggestions for this

committee's guidance are given in each session. Careful preparation is the keynote of this committee's work.

Refreshments Committee: Responsibilities will include planning the church dinner and any teas, food exhibits, etc. that are suggested by the Program Committee.

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

The Worship Committee will have the responsibility for the planning and implementation of all worship programs. This *Guide* provides hints for each session. These can be changed or augmented at the discretion of the committee; for example, a general theme of "intercession" might be carried through the entire study series.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

The enthusiasm and interest of the Publicity Committee is an important factor in a successful program. Posters in strategic locations, items in the church news, announcements to various groups of the church are all commonplace duties, but a clever idea, a few pictures, and art work when possible will lift the commonplace to a level of exciting accomplishment.

A LAST WORD

With committees set up and plans projected into the year, a few last words are in order.

Be careful not to get involved in the day-to-day political affairs and events of the area. Such discussions would consume time needed for the program outlined in this guide. If there is a Middle East crisis during these sessions, appoint one person to make a five-minute report on it during each meeting. When you deal with the Arab-Israeli controversy, be careful not to get lost in it. Keep a tight rein on the schedule and the participants.

The study subject is a difficult one to present. The Middle East is torn by controversies that affect the mission of the church and the peace of the world. The countries and the peoples are diverse and may seem far removed from the study group. But in spite of these negative factors, the texts for this study year present the region in a challenging way, and highlight the fascination that the Middle East undoubtedly has for those people who are already acquainted with it.

The study books have been written by men who have spent a great deal of their lives in the area and know the peoples well—both their languages and customs. Sharing your study sessions with your neighbors will make a special contribution to the community, for opportunities for objective information on this troubled area do not always present themselves.

The study texts are:

R. Park Johnson. *Middle East Pilgrimage*

Geren, Paul. *New Voices, Old Worlds*

Badeau, John. *The Lands Between*

A revised edition of *Introducing Islam*, by J. Christy Wilson has been issued for the study year, and Leaders will find *This Is the Middle East*, by John Blumberg, and *Fun and Festival from the Middle East* of additional help.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR SESSION I

Part I of this session presents an over-all introductory view of the Middle East by means of five reports planned around the figure "3." Because this is the first session it may be necessary for members of the Special Events Committee (Program Committee) to give the reports as well as arrange for them. The reports should be carefully correlated. The following may be a helpful way to visualize the

geographical, historical, and political interrelationships of the Middle East:

Imagine the area to be like a large house with four wings. One wing is Turkey, the second Iran, the third Saudi Arabia, and the fourth Egypt. Each one of these wings has a door opening to a central courtyard that is called the Fertile Crescent. Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, and Iraq are located in this central courtyard. Turkey and Iran, in addition to the front doors, have back doors. Turkey's opens toward Europe, and Iran's toward Asia. Whenever in history the front entrance of these two countries to the central courtyard has been closed, they have not felt threatened. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Egypt have traditionally had only front doors to the central courtyard, and their economic and historical movements have been toward the Fertile Crescent. Consequently, every time their front doors have been closed, both countries have felt threatened. Furthermore, it is true that from the dawn of history until now any power that has gained control of all of the Fertile Crescent has been able to conquer Egypt and Saudi Arabia—but not necessarily Turkey and Iran.

Part II provides for a discussion by the study group based on the reports presented in Part I. Questions and answers to help stimulate discussion should be prepared in advance (see example in Session I).

SESSION 1

Along the Line of March

JOHNSON, chapters 1-2
BADEAU, part 1, chapters 1-2

MATERIALS

Friendship Press political map of the Middle East. (This map should be used extensively by the people making the assigned reports. Some hints for effective usage are given below.)

INTRODUCTION

Suggestions for introductory remarks by the Leader (or other appropriate person) are given at the beginning of each session. Designed to set the pace for the program, they may be expanded by the Leader to any desired length to meet the needs of the study group.

Leader: Very briefly highlights dual purpose of the whole course. (1) To understand the peoples and problems of the Middle East and (2) to relate these to the world Christian mission. These remarks may be set forth in terms of a personal "Middle East Pilgrimage" for the members of the study group.

Leader: Outlines purpose of Session 1: To present factual information on the geography and history of the area, including religious history, and relate these to world of today. After Leader's introductory remarks, program is turned over to the Program Committee Chairman.

PROCEDURES, PART I: *Reports*

The procedures for this and the following sections are planned by members of the Program Committee under the direction of the Chairman.

Session I is divided into two parts. Part I provides for reports by Program Committee members (assigned in the Introduction) on the geography, topography, religion, history, and world importance of the Middle East.

Program Committee Chairman: Before introducing each report, the Chairman should make a general statement on the interesting role of "3" in the Middle East. (See below for development of each item.) There are:

1. Three geographic areas
2. Three topographic areas
3. Three monotheistic religions
4. Three periods of history
5. Three world power blocs

These reports may be developed in the following way:

Program Committee member presents the three geographic areas—Europe, Africa, Asia—of the Middle East. The idea of a crossroads, where three continents meet, is developed with the aid of the Friendship Press map. The member could scotch-tape a piece of transparent paper over the map and mark with crayon the caravan routes, invasion portals, etc., that have been determined by the geographic location of the area. How these have affected the history of the Middle East and the lives of the people should be brought out.

Program Committee member reports on the three topographic divisions of the Middle East—mountains, deserts, and fruitful valleys. What kind of people live in each?

How are their livelihoods determined by their environment? Examples: the nomadic peoples of desert Arabia; the *fellahin*, the earth-bound farmers of Egypt; the Kurds, the hardy mountain peoples of western Iran. The member presenting this report could illustrate the report by marking on transparent paper (taped over the large map, as above) the areas of rainfall in the Middle East (see Rainfall Map in Badeau).

The three great monotheistic religions of the Middle East—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—are presented by the third Program Committee member. This report highlights the old Christian churches, outlines briefly the role of Islam in the region and sketches the historic importance of Judaism. The committee member may, if desired, illustrate the report with three small charts—the first marked with a Cross and listing the ancient churches, Nestorian, Chaldean, Coptic, etc.; the second marked with a Crescent and giving the principal dates and sects in Islam; the third marked with the Star of David and showing principal figures of the Old Testament. For the sketch on Judaism, Jeremiah 29:1-14 is suggested for reference.

The Program Committee member presenting the history report should divide it into three periods of time—*ancient* times; *medieval*, stressing the contribution of Islam; and *modern*, noting the impact of westernization on the Middle East. (If the Arab-Israeli problem is presented here—it is covered in Session 6—treat it briefly and as objectively as possible.) This report could be illustrated with the names of figures not familiarly associated with the region. Saint Paul in Turkey; Marco Polo, traveling across Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan to reach China; Napoleon.

The Program Committee member giving the last report dealing with the international importance of the Middle

East should present it in terms of the three world power blocs—Western, Communist, and neutralist (Afro-Asian powers). The area's pivotal importance as a military base, as a propaganda center (note the alignment of the Arab countries in the Afro-Asian bloc, particularly on questions coming before the United Nations), as a source of oil, etc., should be noted with reference to each power bloc. The importance of past colonial history and the racial composition of the area are important, also. (The *Readers' Guide* at the public library will be helpful in locating magazine material for this report.) A montage of newspaper headlines illustrating current happenings in the Middle East will give timeliness and a sense of immediacy to the report.

PROCEDURES, PART II: *Discussion*

Leader (Opens Part II by summarizing high points of Part I—these remarks are designed as a “bridge” into the discussion period):

Today, as we have gone along the line of march of the great Middle East Pilgrimage, we have met many peoples and have encountered some of the roadblocks and dangers that beset them on their pilgrimage. We are beginning to have an understanding, even of little things. For instance, we know now that if some places in the Middle East seem to have an inadequate sense of cleanliness, it is not because of indifference—they just don't have water to spare to wash with! We have seen also that this area has some very old cultures—old ways of doing things. Sometimes this puts whole nations into a kind of rut, just as it does individuals when they cling to old habits too long. And just to think that in our country we had the covered wagon, then the pony express, the train, next the airplane and now we have the jet—yet the Middle East is encompassing all of these degrees of progress at one time.

I know that we still have some questions in our mind after these reports and we are going to spend the next half hour dis-

cussing some of them. I've wondered, myself, what were some of the reasons for the stagnation of Islamic culture after so many centuries of flowering; I'm troubled, too, by the condition of the old churches; and I keep seeking for things that we as Christians and as Westerners can do to help this modern pilgrimage.

For this discussion the Program Committee should prepare a number of questions, covering today's session and based on Johnson and Badeau, which they believe will particularly interest their group. Answers should also be prepared. The questions should then be given out to selected members of the study group, while the answers are distributed to different members. When the discussion period comes, one person will pose the question, and if the study group does not respond, the person holding the answer will volunteer the information. This technique is expected to stimulate a general group discussion but not, of course, to take its place.

Some sample questions (the questions posed above by the Leader could also be presented in this way):

1. The Middle East in the past was important because of its trade routes. What are some of the reasons it is important today?
2. What were some of the factors contributing to the awakening of the Middle East?

WORSHIP

Hymn: "Come Ye Faithful Raise the Strain"

Worship Committee member: Reads Hebrews 11:8-16

Worship Committee Chairman: Meditation on today's pilgrimage in the Middle East (refer to Introduction of Johnson for helpful ideas).

Prayer: For guidance in this study, for ability to sympathize, for wisdom to understand.

Hymn: "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow"

ASSIGNMENTS

Bookstall. Session 2 is the first appearance of the bookstall. Display the texts and materials on the Countries of Emphasis. Perhaps your library has pictures of Saudi Arabia from ARAMCO that can be borrowed for the exhibit. Check your denominational sources for material on work in Turkey or Lebanon.

Reports on the Countries of Emphasis. These reports form Part I of each session. Their over-all format should be worked out now (see Session 2) and then a check should be kept to see that each report will be ready for its assigned session. Suggestions for developing the reports will be found in Part I of each session. Countries of Emphasis in Session 2: Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon.

Round Table. Select participants and arrange for the preparation of the "speeches." Prepare for a discussion period following the round table.

SESSION 2

Meet the People

JOHNSON, chapter 3
BADEAU, part 1, chapters 3-4; part 2, chapters 1-2
GEREN, chapter 1

COUNTRIES OF EMPHASIS IN SESSION 2

Turkey
Saudi Arabia
Lebanon

MATERIALS

Bookstall

Map, marked to show Countries of Emphasis (Crescents cut out of green—the Muslim color—felt or paper could be pinned on the Islamic countries. A Cross of purple could be pinned on Lebanon.)

If your denomination has work in the area, tie it in with the reports and the Bookstall display.

INTRODUCTION

Leader: The Middle East is made up of many races, many ancient churches, languages, classes of people, even many different sects of Muslims. In Part I of this session we are going to explore some of this diversity as it appears in three widely separated countries—Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon. These countries differ sharply from one another, but they have each been influenced by Islam. Turkey is among the most westernized countries of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is conservative in its religion, while Lebanon is the only country in the Middle

East where Christians approximate a majority. But we will learn more about this region of opposites from our Program Committee!

PROCEDURES, PART I: *Reports*

Reports on the Countries of Emphasis should open each session, with the format for each session remaining constant. The reports should treat briefly the history and political situation; some typical social problems; and the religious concerns of the country and the relation of the people to them. The *Guide* will highlight some point under each of these divisions country by country as they are studied. The Program Committee may wish to add to the divisions or to stress other factors. This flexible arrangement can be adapted to the needs and interests of the group and to the amount of time that the Committee feels should go into the preparation of each report. If possible, the member making the report should consult the public library.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT ON TURKEY:

History and political factors: races and languages of Turkey; classes—the peasants; Ottoman Empire; Ataturk.

Typical social problems: women; health, education.

Religious concerns and the people: separation of religion and state; abolition of the caliphate; persecution of Christians in the past.

For nearly six hundred years the Turks were the masters of all of the Middle East except Iran. The Turkish sultan was also the caliph of all Islam. It is important to note that Arab nationalism got its start against the Turks and not against the

Europeans. In 1923 the sultan of Turkey was forced to abdicate, the caliphate was abolished, and Turkey as the seat of Islam ceased to be. It was the first time in history that Islam was without a caliph; it still is without one. It was also the first time in history that an Islamic nation deliberately separated religion from the state and established a secular republic. As a country, Turkey has decided to turn her back to the East and follow the West. What this will do to Islam and what Islam will mean to the Turks are open questions.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT ON SAUDI ARABIA:

History and political factors: Muhammad; classes, stress the nomad; role of the desert; oil in the world economy.

Typical social problems: women; slavery; health; education; rapid social change due to discovery of oil.

Religious concerns and the people: Wahabbi Brotherhood; Islamic conservatism and communism; Yemen (as part of the Arabian heritage) and the new Arab alignment; not much Christian work at present but note history of the Arabia Mission.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT ON LEBANON:

History and political factors: a haven through the centuries for religious refugees; classes—mercantile; contemporary role in the Middle East; leaders—Malik.

Typical social problems: women; education; health; contributions of Christian institutions to country.

Religious concerns and the people: the delicate balance between Muslim and Christian; importance to all Christians.

Charles Malik, outstanding Christian leader and diplomat of Lebanon, has said: “. . . Lebanon's meaning to the Arab World is entirely positive, realizing its essential limitations in all humil-

ity, it knows also that it exists to love and serve the Arab World, to cooperate with it to the full, to carry its voice to regions which the Arab World cannot reach, or cannot reach with the same efficacy. . . .”

A brief discussion by the study group should follow the reports. The group might consider some of the problems of the Middle East that became apparent to them for the first time through the reports.

PROCEDURES, PART II: *Round Table*

Part II is a round table on the subject of “Today’s Unrest in the Middle East.” Specific Middle Eastern points of view should be presented by speakers able to converse naturally in the pattern demanded by a round table. The Program Committee can prepare each part, or ask each speaker to prepare his own. (Source material for each “speech” can be found in Johnson, *Impact of the West*, and *Reappraisal of Islam*; and in Badeau.) It should be understood that these speakers are artificial in the sense that they do not represent real persons, who actually might share many of these attitudes. For example, Charles Malik is at once pro-western, a nationalist, a progressive, and a Christian. Each speaker merely serves to show one aspect of the problems of the Middle East. Some suggestions for participants:

Muslim speaker: Questions if Islam has answers for the modern world; if it was a basic weakness in Islam that led to Western domination; calls attention to the contributions of Christian neighbors and suggests a “reformation” in Islam.

Leftist speaker: Considers questions in Middle East in terms of friendship for Communist bloc; relates these to economics, Russian arms, youth programs.

Pro-Western speaker: Reviews Western contributions to the Middle East—economic, technical aid, aid to refugees, church programs.

Progressive-minded speaker: Would accept something from everyone if it meant progress—Russian money, Western gadgets, labor-saving devices.

Nationalist speaker: Stresses new alignments of the Arab countries, colonialism, political role of the Middle East in the world.

Christian speaker: Discusses the issues raised by the other speakers, trying to bring them together in a constructive way motivated by love and a desire to serve.

It should be noted that this round table is supposed to represent typical Middle Eastern points of view—not Western. Almost all Middle Easterners are “nationalists” to a degree. This nationalism is made up of *pride in the past*, which contributed the wheel, the calendar, and algebra to civilization, and such gifts of the spirit as the teachings of Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Nationalism also has within it the *feeling of inferiority*, because this great progress was not maintained into modern times. The nationalist, too, is *envious* and *critical* of America and *jealous* of his fellow nationalist in the Middle East. He wants to build a new nation. The Middle Eastern nationalist is pushed and pulled simultaneously by three different forces: traditional Islam, Western democracy, and communism.

The round table should stimulate considerable interest in the problems and unrest in the Middle East, and time should be provided for questions from the study group. Some questions that class members may ask, and which the round table participants should be prepared to answer are:

1. Is it a good thing that the Arab countries are uniting?
2. Should the essential structure of the Middle Eastern nations remain based on traditional Islamic foundations or should it be secular, as in the West?
3. How can the Middle East best reconcile Islamic tradition and Western progress?

4. What effect have such Western exports to the Middle East as bubble gum (see Johnson's story on p. 8), D.D.T., sports, democracy, movies, etc., had on Middle Eastern life?

5. If the rising social awareness among the Middle Easterners is good, what have we to offer to help them attain their goals? Military aid? Economic aid? Technical aid? Education? In what order should they be given?

PROCEDURES, PART II: *Alternate Program*

For drama and interest the study group may prefer a play—reading or staging—in place of the round table. The one-act play, *The Khanum and Her Treasures*, by Grace Visser Payne, presents an appealing story of the forces contending for the allegiance of each member of a family in Iran. Secularism, Islamic conservatism, Christianity, and communism are portrayed.

WORSHIP

Worship Committee Chairman: Meditation on the life of Mansur Sang. Tell the story from Geren briefly and read extracts; stress that this one life illustrates the Middle East's pilgrimage of the spirit.

Worship Committee member: Read Psalm 122 and pray for peace in the land of our Lord.

Hymn: "Awake My Soul Stretch Every Nerve"

ASSIGNMENTS

Bookstall. Concentrate on Islam. See the *National Geographic* magazine, July 1953, and *Life Magazine's* "Great Religions" series. Use magazine pictures for posters.

Prepare chart showing "Important Dates of Islam" and mimeograph "Outlines of Muslim Doctrine," both from Christy Wilson.

Prepare for Coffee House conversation.

Select chairmen for Buzz Session and assign questions.

SESSION 3

The Nature of Islam

JOHNSON, chapters 4-5
BADEAU, part 3, chapters 1, 3
WILSON, *Introducing Islam*

COUNTRIES OF EMPHASIS IN SESSION 3

Egypt
Syria
Pakistan

MATERIALS

Bookstall
Map, marked to show union of Egypt and Syria (United Arab Republic)
Map, marked to show locations of work supported by your denomination
Picture Posters
Chart, "Important Dates of Islam"
Outlines of Muslim Doctrine

INTRODUCTION

Leader: In this session we are going to learn a little about what it means to be a Muslim. We used to call the followers of Muhammad, Mohammedans, but believers prefer to be known as Muslims—those who submit to the will of God, as our author Badeau says. Their religion, too, is most properly called "Islam."

There are almost 370 million Muslims in the world, not all of them, of course, living within this year's area of study. But

the religion did begin in Arabia and most of the Middle East is overwhelmingly Muslim.

Two of our countries of emphasis, Egypt and Syria, are rather typical Muslim countries as well as being newly united ones. Pakistan, while geographically removed from the other two, is very similar to them. Although it is a modern state, it is founded upon the principles of Islam. It has been said that many Muslims have advanced from Abraham to Aramco in two generations. This devastating change, aside from its social implications, has brought many problems of a religious nature to the Muslim believer—the earning of interest on savings accounts, for example, which is forbidden by the Koran. During this session, we should try to note other instances where westernization seems to be affecting Islam.

PROCEDURES, PART I: *Reports*

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT ON EGYPT AND SYRIA (members of the United Arab Republic):

History and political factors: stress union of the two countries; examine the common factors that led to union—Arab nationalism, colonial past.

Typical social problems: women, health, education, plight of the peasants.

Religious concerns and the people: note the Christian work in each country; Eastern rite churches.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT ON PAKISTAN:

History and political factors: note colonial past; review the development of a modern state based on Islamic principles—as contrasted with the older Islamic countries of the preceding report.

Typical social problems: women, health, education; note activities of some outstanding Pakistani women.

Religious concerns and the people: treat objectively the religious differences that led to partition of India; note old Nestorian missionary work (there is even a legend that Saint Thomas made converts in this area) and review present Western endeavor.

This session's reports on the Countries of Emphasis might be summarized by someone in the study group. The Leader should alert that person to be prepared to pick out the highlights—with particular reference to the theme of the session, the nature of Islam.

PROCEDURES, PART II: *Coffee House Conversation*

Select two people to represent the two major sects of Islam—Sunnite and Shiite. (If desired, other sects can also be represented. See Johnson, Appendix, also Wilson, pp. 48-52.) Provide speakers with cloth-covered table, demitasse cups, and possibly a sign or some other device to give atmosphere of Middle East coffee house.

The two speakers should converse together about their Muslim faith, bringing out the basic tenets of Islam. Perhaps one of them has made the pilgrimage to Mecca and describes this in terms of his renewed faith. Some of the beliefs might be illustrated by the speakers discussing how their two religious observances differ—the way they perform their prayers, for example. The coffee house conversation can be brought to a close by the two speakers reading the "Outline of Muslim Doctrine" (Wilson, p. 38). The lines and enumerated items may be alternated in any desired way, and some items may be paraphrased, as "I believe in the prophets," or "I always try to give more alms during Ramadan (the month of fasting)." The speakers then could distribute mimeographed copies of the "Outline of Muslim Doctrine" to the study group to take home.

PROCEDURES, PART III: *Buzz Session on the Relationship Between Christianity and Islam*

The Leader should divide the study group five ways. The pre-selected chairmen (see assignments, session 2) will take over their groups and each will lead a discussion of the question assigned to him. The five questions are given below, with a hint to the chairman under each.

1. Is the God of Islam only a God of supreme power, or is he also a God of love?

The Muslims talk about God as compassionate and merciful, but in their conception he is more like a judge who, after sentencing the wrongdoer, lessens the punishment.

2. Can a religion based on submission to the decrees of an arbitrary God produce a conviction of genuine freedom and responsibility in the heart of man?

Islam is a religion in which a belief in predestination leads to fatalism which, in turn, dulls the sense of responsibility.

3. Can there be an effective moral dynamic force when ethical commands are not rooted in the character of God?

A Muslim moralist of Iran says, "Accept an advice even though it be written on a wall." He argues that it is not necessary for the giver of advice to follow his own ideas.

4. Can a religion as bare and rigid as Islam promote the highest development of human potentialities?

On the other hand is too much complexity as harmful as too much simplicity?

5. Can religious law imposed by a civil community create the liberty in which the best development of human character can take place?

It seems fairly certain that whenever the power of the state and the power of religion have merged, both have been corrupted and freedom has vanished.

After an agreed interval, the Leader should call the

groups back together for a recap on their discussions. The entire group might then consider the following paraphrased statement of Dr. Kenneth Cragg:

. . . to the Muslim understanding of God must be added the Christian understanding of Christ. The more we know about the first [Islam] the more we see the [need] of the insights of the second.

WORSHIP

Worship Committee Chairman: Meditation on the part of the Apostle's Creed that the Muslim can accept; strengths of Islam; Christian understanding and attitudes.

In the following version of the Apostle's Creed, the italicized portions are the parts Muslims would omit:

I believe in God *the Father Almighty*, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ *His only Son, our Lord*: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius' Pilate, *Was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead*: He ascended into heaven, *And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty*: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost: *The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints*: The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body: And the Life everlasting.

ASSIGNMENTS

Bookstall

Prepare for dinner; confer with speaker or debaters.

Prepare pro and con statements for the debate.

If alternate program is used—such as the film—make all necessary arrangements.

SESSION 4

The Christians of the Eastern Church

JOHNSON, chapter 6

BADEAU, part 3, chapter 2

COUNTRIES OF EMPHASIS IN SESSION 4

Iran

Ethiopia

MATERIALS

Bookstall

Accessories for the dinner

INTRODUCTION

Since this session is planned as a dinner, the Leader may wish to give only a welcoming word, keyed to the Middle East theme.

PROCEDURES, PART I: *Dinner*

The Middle East is such an ancient, diverse, and colorful region that ideas for the plans and decorations for the dinner are almost limitless. The Program Committee will probably delight in the challenge it offers for a truly memorable occasion.

Decorations for the dinner can consist of maps, posters, and pictures. In addition, a display of articles from the Middle East would provide an attractive center of interest. These may be obtained from persons in your community who have visited in the area. Music, on tape or records,

might be obtained from the same sources. If there are persons in your community who once lived in the Middle East, they should be invited to attend.

If your denomination has missionaries working in the Middle East, you may be able to obtain decorations or other materials from it. The Wright Studios (see Resources) is another source.

PROCEDURES, PART II: *Speech or debate, discussion*

Using the Johnson, Badeau, and Geren books as resources for their material, a speaker or debaters should make a presentation on the ancient churches which are located in the Middle East.

If you use the speaker, he should be notified well in advance so that he can prepare adequately. He should be a member of the group involved in the study and should have the ability to prepare and deliver an effective talk on the subject. Salient points might cover the reasons for the Christian church becoming a minority in the Middle East; how the *millet* system developed; the effect of minority status on the outlook of the old church Christians.

If a debate is to be presented, advance preparation will be necessary for the debaters. The question they will debate is: Resolved that the Orthodox churches have failed in their responsibility as Christians in the Middle East. The dinner group can be asked to judge the outcome, or several judges can be appointed. The winning debate team might be awarded small maps of the Middle East or some other suitable item.

The Leader, conducting the discussion period that follows, can use such questions as:

1. Have you ever been a member of a minority group? How do you think it feels to be the member of a minority group?
2. Considering that the Christian church has had a minority

status in other areas of the world and has not become ingrown, suspicious, and tenacious, why has it happened in the Middle East? (The Leader should try to lead the group to an understanding that once a church becomes too much involved in itself rather than in reaching out to others, it loses its virility and influence.)

3. Early modern missionaries tried to reach Muslims by re-kindling evangelism in the old churches; how did this work?

PROCEDURES, ALTERNATE PROGRAMS

If an all church dinner does not seem feasible, Part I of Session 4 can continue the pattern established in the preceding sessions by opening with factual reports on the Countries of Emphasis. In this case, Ethiopia, which is really more African than Middle Eastern, would be treated very briefly, with particular emphasis on the Coptic church. The following can be noted about Iran:

The Persians have been an enigma in the history of Islam. They were the only people of the Middle East to oppose the purposes of the Arabs. This resistance was so strong that the psychological attitude of the Persians to this day is set against the Arab conquest and everything connected with it. In 750 the unity of the Arab Empire was shattered for all time through the planning and aid of the Persians. They resisted conversion to Islam for a long period, also, and when they did accept the religion, they modified it. Present day Persians (Iranians) are proud of Zoroastrianism, which they rejected, but feel little enthusiasm for Islam, which they did accept. Persians wrote the first complete grammar for the Arabic language, but refused to speak it. They wrote a systematic philosophy for Islam, but failed to follow it. They are in the Islamic world, but are considered its black sheep.

In place of a debate in Part II, a three-way discussion on today's role of the Orthodox church in the Middle East could be presented. Volunteers might be asked to take

the part of a Muslim teacher, an Orthodox clergyman, and an evangelical Bible woman. Or a discussion with prepared speeches might present the high points of the various old Christian faiths—Nestorian, Coptic, Maronite.

If the film, "Mid-East Profile," is given as Part II of the session, it is suggested that the Leader designate a number of people to watch for specific points for a group discussion after the showing. Members could note: (1) Evidences of the strength of Islam; (2) of Western culture; (3) of poverty; (4) the position of women—veiled or unveiled.

After the film, the various appointed members should report their observations to the group for discussion.

WORSHIP

Worship Committee Chairman: Lead group in prayer of thanks for the remnants of the Christian church that remained loyal through the centuries, and for their revitalization in the years ahead.

Instead of this, the Chairman could offer a prayer from the third century Eastern church liturgy:

We give thanks unto Thee, the Doer of Good and the Merciful Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for He hath sheltered us, He hath kept us, He hath redeemed us unto Himself; He hath spared us, He hath helped us; He hath brought us to this hour. Keep us, we pray Thee, this day and all the days of our life in peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ASSIGNMENTS

Bookstall

Story-telling hour—make plans and alert participants.

Assign text reading, emphasizing that entire group is to participate in reporting on the missionary outreach.

If alternate program is used, be sure to order enough copies of the DFM booklet.

SESSION 5

Missionary Achievements— Yesterday and Today

JOHNSON, chapter 7
BADEAU, part 3, chapter 4
BLUMBERG, pp. 13-18
GEREN

COUNTRIES OF EMPHASIS IN SESSION 5

Iraq
Jordan

MATERIALS

Bookstall

Map, marked to show the union of the Countries of Emphasis (the Arab Federation)

Map, marked to show denominational work

INTRODUCTION

Leader: When we first study our texts on the outreach of the church in the Middle East, we may have a momentary sense of failure. There has been over a century of stirring, devoted missionary service in the region, but the number of Protestant churches remains small. However, our authors have indicated some of the reasons for the low number of converts: The mission field is a difficult one because of the overt opposition of Islam; instead of establishing new Protestant groups, the various boards tried for many years to work within the Orthodox

Church; and there was opposition from the old churches to their Protestant-minded members—as well as to mission work.

Happily, missionary endeavor in the Middle East is not judged solely by numbers. The degree to which Protestant Christians contributed to the awakening of the moribund Islamic world cannot be overlooked. Educational institutions from grade school to college level, printing presses, literacy programs, hospitals, clinics—the list is long. And of things of the spirit, the record, too, is worthy of high praise. A new sense of moral values, a stimulation of inquiry within Islam itself that may lead to a “reformation”—these are all contributions made by Western Christian workers.

After our usual report on the Countries of Emphasis, our program will highlight some typical missionary lives. From the earliest years and the efforts of William Shedd, to the present and the work among Palestinian Arab refugees of Christina and Willard Jones, Christian accomplishment in the Middle East has been reflected in the consecrated lives of devoted individuals.

PROCEDURES, PART I: *Reports*

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT ON JORDAN AND IRAQ:

These two countries should be treated together because they form the new Arab Federation. Follow the same format as in the previous sessions, highlighting the Hashemite family connections; the opportunities, if any, for extending missionary endeavor into Jordan from the already established work in Iraq; the political importance of the area to Western powers; the problem to Jordan of the Palestinian Arab refugees. The following quotation from “Lands East,” Jan.-Feb. 1957, may be useful to the person presenting the report on typical social problems:

. . . One of the most remarkable phenomena of the Arab world is that in the space of two decades, Iraqi women, on their own initiative, have shed their veils and moved from

obscurity into a new world of personal achievement and public service. . . . In other Eastern countries such as Turkey and Iran, the veil was out-lawed by legal decree, but the change in Iraq has come about by choice of the women themselves. . . .

PROCEDURES, PART II: *Story-telling Hour*

The Program Committee can arrange for members of the study group to tell selected stories from Geren, such as found in "William Shedd," "Sisters in Courage," "Four Among Thousands." Excerpts, read from the book, will give heightened interest. (If the biography covers a worker from the study group's own board, obtain additional material on the area and the work.)

Instead of a story-telling session, the Program Committee may wish to develop the biographical idea by means of a dramatic panorama. A study group member would read an excerpt from one of the Geren stories (or from other sources, such as those included in the Johnson booklist) and a narrator would link it to the next reading. It might develop in the following way:

(Two members read from "They Made A Path," based on the life of Raymond Lull—see Resources.) *First member* (chanting): Great is Allah and Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah!

Second member (representing Lull): No! Greater is our Father God and his only Son our Lord. For God so loved man that he was willing to become man . . . to endure poverty, torture, and death for his sake. That is a love beyond the love of your Allah, and Islam is a loveless religion.

First member: Infidel! Blasphemer! Christian dog! We will see thee cry mercy to Allah from the rack!

Second member: Death has no terror for a servant of Christ. Men are wont to die of old age, the failure of natural warmth, and the excess of cold . . . but I would prefer to die in the glow of love among the souls I have sought to save.

Narrator: Thus a Christian life flickered out in the gospel's

cause, but mission work was not to begin in earnest for another couple of centuries when Levi Parsons, Pliny Fisk, the Justin Perkinses, and others gave their lives to the Muslim field. It wasn't long after this that a young man at Princeton Theological Seminary was writing to his mother.

Another member (reading from Geren, "William Shedd"): "I feel that I should like to register a vow to devote my life to [work in the Middle East]. . . . It seems to me that it is the hardest missionary [field]."

Narrator: William Shedd kept his vow and went to Iran to minister to the Nestorian Christians around Urmia. Years later World War I came, bringing the fearful Muslim attacks on the Christian minorities.

Member (Tells or reads of the fear-filled flight of William Shedd with the Nestorian and Armenian peoples.)

Narrator: William Shedd, like so many on that tragic journey, did not live to see its end, but some of the refugee sons and daughters of the Evangelical Church of Urmia survived to witness in many lands. Some found a place in other parts of Iran, some in northern Syria, and many in Iraq. Others did not stop until they reached . . . the United States.

The above is just an example. The Program Committee can develop this panorama idea to any desired length and include any number of participants. The only necessary qualifying point to bear in mind is that the program should be carefully organized, each part related to the next, and each participant alerted to his exact responsibility.

No matter how it is developed, the story-telling hour should be concluded by a discussion on the reasons for such a small number of Christians in the Middle East in the face of such devoted work. Some of these are:

1. The effect of the *millet* system on the mentality of the Muslim has been such that he thinks that by becoming a Christian he will give up his nationality and, worse still, will become an Armenian, Copt, or Nestorian.

2. The failure of the missionaries in the past century to preach the gospel directly to the Muslims.

3. The refusal of the "old" Christians to believe it is possible or even desirable for a non-Christian to become one.

4. The inability of the Christian Church in the past century to create a Christian community. Hence, when a non-Christian joins the Church he is not accepted because of religious, national, and social prejudices.

PROCEDURES, PART III: *Reports*

For Part III, the study group should be asked to read the texts and report on the mission work in the Middle East. "The Silent Centuries," "Results of Early Missionary Labors," etc., from the Johnson text should be covered. (See also Blumberg.) After they have thoroughly explored missionary activity (including work of own board), the group might discuss the following:

1. A group interested in developing welfare programs for Iranian young people included a few representatives of American government agencies. During the discussions of a special project, it was suggested that the advice of a certain missionary be sought. One of the Americans objected, saying, "We don't want to get mixed up with something like that." The leader of the group, a highly-placed Iranian official, smiled at him and replied, "Long before you came here, the missionaries were here. And long after you leave, they will still be here. Isn't it significant to you, sir, that every Iranian, including myself, in this youth work group is the product of a missionary school?" Discuss the extent of Christian influence this incident reveals, also the attitude of the American government official.

2. An alumni meeting of the American University of Beirut was once postponed at the request of the Iraqi parliament because if all the alumni who were members of the parliament attended, there would not be a quorum left in the parliament for official business! Discuss whether these Protestant-educated non-Christians would become professing Christians if Islam did

not shape the social fabric of the country, as well as the religious life of the people.

3. A member of the Coptic Church stated that the best thing that ever happened to his church was the founding of the Evangelical churches because they compelled the awakening and reform of the older church. Discuss this statement in terms of the future of the Middle East. Can the old churches make a positive contribution to progress in the area in the next fifty years?

PROCEDURES, PART III: *Alternate Program*

If time and interest at this session will support a more penetrating study of contemporary mission work, an additional or alternate program based on the National Council of Churches (DFM) publication, *The Outreach in the Near East* (see p. 47 of this *Guide*) is suggested.

This concise little booklet was published "for a study of the means and the extent of co-operation among Mission Boards in their work, and in their united assistance to the churches in the Near East." In outlining the "Direction of the Future," the booklet treats briefly the indigenous church, the role of institutions, Christian witness to Muslims, and strengthening co-operation. The role and relationships of the International Missionary Council, the Near East Christian Council, and the Near East Committee of the National Council of Churches also are covered.

This alternate program, "Discussion Outreach," is very flexible, and if not used here it may be planned as an integral part of Session 6. Its aim is to define the mission of the church in the Middle East and to relate the local church to the total effort. The Program Committee probably should prepare the speeches for the discussion group or have the groups prepare them only after careful consultation with the Committee and among themselves.

Select persons from the study group who will be able to represent the following: a *Near East Christian Council member*; two *Evangelical church members*; a *Near East Committee member*; a *North American visitor* and his *wife* who represent their local church. These six meet informally in Beirut to consider the church's outreach. Let each church representative describe his part in the co-operative work. Develop the headings in the booklet: the Indigenous Church; Role of Institutions, etc. Lift up and discuss such statements as: "Must there be one local congregation for those who come from an ancient Christian heritage and another for converts from Islam?" (p. 7.) Have the local church visitor and his wife explore their responsibilities, if any, to the Near East Committee. Discuss in depth the projects covered in section, "Working Together," pp. 15-20. This includes the Christian Study Center for Islam; the co-operative program for graded Sunday school literature for the Evangelical churches; the projected Christian broadcasting station; Christian home and family life conference; Bible correspondence courses. Emphasize the help that the visitor and his wife may be able to give through their local church activities to forward the co-operative program. (The Blumberg book will be a useful adjunct to the Program Committee in preparing for "Discussion Outreach.")

Leader: Summarizes "Discussion Outreach" and leads study group in a consideration of what THEY can do. (More money may be the quickest answer, but it isn't always *all* of the answer. What the Christian as a citizen can do, for example, might be considered by the Leader.)

WORSHIP

Meditation on the religious experience of Sheikh Kamel, a contemporary Christian convert from Islam who was imprisoned for his faith (Geren). His pre-conversion be-

havior emphasizes the obstacles confronting mission workers, while his later Christian devotion demonstrates the value of a re-created life.

Instead of the foregoing meditation, the Worship Committee Chairman may wish to lead the group in a discussion—and a meditation on the last sentence—of this quotation from Dr. Kenneth Cragg:

. . . The Christian will approach with humility any religion other than his own and will be on his guard against coming to any hasty conclusion. He will be very conscious of the failure of Christianity to discipline the Western world; he will know that this is not due to any fault in Christianity, but to the failure of the West to accept Christianity. *It may be that Islam has more influence in the Muslim world than Christianity has in the so-called Christian world.* (Near East Gleanings. Occasional Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 2, April 1957.)

ASSIGNMENT

Bookstall

Appoint someone to review the life of Halana Makhiel, using Geren text.

Arrange for filmstrip and prepare for the discussion.

Appoint four persons to report on the texts (Part III) and draw up questions for the group.

If alternate program is used, order material and prepare questions.

SESSION 6

The Direction of the Middle East Pilgrimage

JOHNSON, chapter 8

BADEAU, part 2, chapter 3

COUNTRIES OF EMPHASIS IN SESSION 6

North Africa—Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia
Israel

MATERIALS

Bookstall

Map, marked to show Countries of Emphasis

Map, marked to show denominational work

Filmstrip

INTRODUCTION

In many ways this session is one of the most important of the study series. The reports on the Countries of Emphasis present two of the most troubled regions of the Middle East. The hates and fears of these areas create international problems of such complexity that they may affect the present and future lives of everyone in the study group. The importance of informed understanding for the individual Christian citizen can scarcely be overstated. Moreover, this session in a sense summarizes all preceding sessions, for the diversity of the Middle East is revealed in

the nature of its controversies. And again, Communism, the West, Islam, and Christianity all raise questions for the Middle East that only time can resolve. The obligation of this session is to bring out the degree to which we share the Middle Easterner's dilemma as he confronts the future and struggles with the questions and the conflicting answers posed by today's world.

Leader: In this session we are going to take a look into the future of the Middle East. We are only able to do this because past sessions have brought us some insight into the many problems that are besetting this ancient region. Some of these problems we know are inherent in the march of progress. We have seen, for example, the conflict between seventh century Islam and a western oil economy in Saudi Arabia.

In this session the reports of the Countries of Emphasis will cover two very controversial regions in the Middle East—the North African countries of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, and the State of Israel. The march of progress in the Middle East has helped to make these regions controversial just as it has posed problems in Saudi Arabia. Factors that we have come to recognize as sometimes associated with progress in other countries of the Middle East—nationalism, colonialism, uneven economic development, and religious differences—all lie behind the dramatic headlines. Remembering this, we must try to see truth on whatever side while we study the problems of these two regions, and to maintain a Christian spirit of good will and understanding. We should be alert, too, each one of us, for things that we can do to help.

PROCEDURES, PART I: *Reports*

The reports on the Countries of Emphasis should follow the same format as all the previous reports. Use the texts and supplement them only with carefully selected material. Try to be as objective as possible.

Ask two class members to be prepared to summarize the

reports and to lead the group in a discussion. The following are some suggested discussion questions.

1. Why do you think the French are so reluctant to relinquish complete control in North Africa?
2. There is a naval base in Tunisia under nominal French control that is an important part of NATO planning for Western defense. What importance do you think this should have in determining our policy toward France and Tunisia?
3. Distinguish between Judaism and Zionism.
4. Conflicting promises were made to both Arabs and Jews by the Western Powers. Let two class members take the respective parts and describe how they feel about these promises.

PROCEDURES, PART II: *Filmstrip*

Before the showing of the filmstrip, a study member should give a review of the life of Halana Makhel (Geren).

Leader: Halana's work will *really* come alive for us in this filmstrip. A busy schedule kept her from taking part in its preparation, but the village and the people that we will see are just like those that claim her time and energy. As we watch the filmstrip, we should imagine what the history of the Middle East might be like in ten years if it were possible for such a literacy program to be extended to all the little villages in our study area. What would happen if a man, learning to read, discovered how to purify his well water, how to treat his sick chickens; his wife learned how to keep their food clean and fly-free? Multiply the family by the village, by the country—the possibilities for a more abundant life are thrilling.

After showing the filmstrip, have the class discuss the imagined progress that would stem from a widespread literacy program. They might also consider:

1. What are some of the distinguishing things about a successful literacy program? (Co-operation of all groups, desire of the people to help themselves, etc.)

2. Should American young people be encouraged by the churches and schools to volunteer for work of this kind?

3. Should there be an extensive and intensive literacy program sponsored by the United Nations? Should we support such a program?

4. What can we do *here* to extend the literacy program? (Vote on the best ideas—augment them as much as possible by discussion.)

PROCEDURES, PART III: *Reports*

Four persons, who will study the texts carefully, should be selected to report on the last chapters of Badeau and Johnson. What will be the direction of the Middle East pilgrimage—down the road toward communism? Toward a strengthened Islam? Along a Western route? Will Christianity provide an avenue? One of these possibilities should be assigned to each reporter for study and examination. After hearing the four reports, the study group should split up into smaller groups and discuss the avenues of change and progress that have been presented. The chairman of each of these small groups might stimulate discussion by presenting an “inflammatory” statement to his group for consideration. Something like the following might be used:

“It is an un-Christian act to ship arms to the Middle Eastern countries to oppose communism.” (Said of the Baghdad Pact by someone from the Middle East.)

“Islam practices brotherhood, Christianity just talks about it.”

“Communist countries have offered extensive help to the Middle East and they would be foolish not to take it.”

“Who can dispute the fact that Islam is the path of peace, while Christian countries support war.” (Frequently said by Muslims.)

“When there are such overwhelming obstacles in the way of

Christian missions in the Middle East, why bother?" (Dr. Kenneth Cragg has answered, "... the mission is not a calculus of success, but an obligation in love. Statistics do not make it, nor can they unmake it. . . . As long as Christ is Christ, and the Church knows both itself and Him, there will be a mission to Islam.")

The groups might consider that (1) all Westerners aren't ready yet to give up imperialism (2) the United States' government is preoccupied with military defense to the extent that every movement against the status quo in the Middle East is taken to be communistic and (3) the idea that communism can be stopped with guns and defense pacts is unworthy of Christians.

The groups should be called back together again to report their views. The Leader could then pose the question of what can be done as Christians; as citizens; is there a conflict between the position one *should* take as a Christian and what one *would* take as a citizen?

PROCEDURES, ALTERNATE PROGRAM: *Refugees from Palestine*

"One of the most important causes of the unrest in the Middle East and at the same time the most tragic victim," is the way a United Nations spokesman has described the Palestinian Arab refugee. Today there are over 924,922 persons who fall into this unhappy classification. They not only challenge the world's conscience, but they pose a major dilemma as well. On the one hand, "while the refugee problem remains unsolved, there can be no peace in the Middle East." On the other hand, "while there is no peace in the Middle East, the Arab refugee problem cannot be solved."

The Program Committee may present this problem to the study group in several ways. Here is one way. Dis-

tribute copies of the report, *Refugees from Palestine*, (see Resources, p. 47) to the group, asking them to read it and bring to this session some suggested ways the study group can help to implement the work of the churches. If this plan is followed, the Leader should be prepared to outline the problem very briefly for visitors and others, and to summarize the recommendations made by the National Council of Churches' special committee.

The study group might consider some of the following:

1. Watch denominational literature and the popular press for articles about the plight of the refugee. Share these with neighbors, calling attention to the problem.

2. Write to the United Nations for information on the refugees (see Resources, p. 47) and discuss it with neighbors, study group members, the wider church.

3. Learn of, publicize, and support the work of Church World Service in this area.

4. Plan an all church project for the "adoption" of a frontier village.

5. Encourage personal prayers for the refugees.

As an alternate method of presenting the refugee problem, the Program Committee might show the Church World Service filmstrip, *Exiles in the Holy Land* (see Resources, p. 47), followed by a discussion on what the study group can do as Christians and citizens.

WORSHIP

Hymn: "From All That Dwell Beneath The Sky."

Worship Committee member: Read Revelations 21:1-7.

Worship Committee Chairman: Meditation and prayer—for clear insight to see the right and for courage to follow Christ; for hope that whatever is done in the will of God will bear fruit; for love that will draw a circle in which all people will be included.

Resources

Except where otherwise indicated, books and other supplies in this list are publications of Friendship Press and may be obtained through your denominational bookstore or literature depository. A complete list of books for resource use and reading can be found in *Middle East Pilgrimage*, by R. Park Johnson.

FRIENDSHIP PRESS PUBLICATIONS

Badeau, John. *The Lands Between*. A concise and popularly written background book on the geography, history, and peoples of the Middle East. Cloth \$2.95; paper \$1.75.

Blumberg, John. *This is the Middle East*. A new addition to the pictorial "This Is" series. Paper only, 60 cents.

Geren, Paul. *New Voices, Old Worlds*. Popularly written biographies of Middle East Christians who are distinguished for their courage as well as their faith. Cloth \$2.95; paper, \$1.50.

Johnson, R. Park. *Middle East Pilgrimage*. A comprehensive study that gives valuable insights into religious and secular forces at work in the area. Cloth \$2.95, paper \$1.50.

Rowland, Joan. *Fun and Festival From The Middle East*. Paper, 50 cents.

Wilson, J. Christy. *Introducing Islam*. Valuable new material has been added to bring this classic study of the religion of the Muslims up to date. Paper only, 60 cents.

AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

Mid-East Profile. A twenty-eight minute 16 mm. sound film, available in color or black-and-white. A documentary film photographed in the Middle East, it deals with basic issues

and religious problems of the area. Rental, denominational film depositories, color \$12.00; black-and-white \$8.00. Release date, June, 1958.

Village Reborn. A color filmstrip with reading script by Herbert Shore. Approximately 70 frames. Reading script \$5.00.

Exiles in The Holy Land. A 16 minute color filmstrip with 33½ rpm sound record. Produced by, and available from, Church World Service, 215 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. 79 frames. \$3.00.

DRAMA

Kromer, Helen. *They Made A Path.* A pageant about Christian Trailblazers. One scene is from the life of Raymond Lull, missionary to the Muslims. Flexible cast. 75 cents.

Payne, Grace Visser. *The Khanum and Her Treasures.* One-act play portraying some of the forces at work in the Middle East today. Can be used as a play or as a reading. 3 women, 2 men, 3 teen-age girls. 50 cents.

MISCELLANEOUS PROGRAM MATERIALS

Political Map of the Middle East and North Africa. New, full-color. Large, 45 x 30 inches, 75 cents each. Small, 14 x 9 inches, 50 cents a dozen.

The Outreach in the Near East. Rev. ed. Published by the Committee for the Near East, Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of Churches, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 15 cents each; 50 or more, 13 cents each.

Refugees from Palestine. A report with recommendations . . . on the problems of the Arab refugees from Palestine. Published by the Division of Foreign Missions, National Council of Churches, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. 15 cents each. 100 or more, 13 cents each.

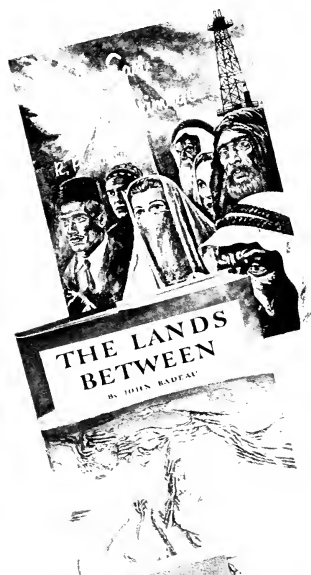
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